

History of Early Childhood Outcomes Initiative

Measuring Outcomes

- 1992 - *Reinventing Government* by Osbourne and Gaebler introduced concept of results-oriented government and emphasized the importance of measuring outcomes rather than inputs.
- 1993 - Results-oriented government started a revolution in public administration that organized at the federal level in the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA). The importance of measuring outcomes has become dogma at all levels of government—local, state, and federal—and the demand for good data on outcomes has permeated all public and private program areas, including housing, health, welfare, and education (Hogan, 2001; Morley, Vinson, & Hatry, 2001).

Special Education

- 1975 - The driving force behind the passage of PL 94-142 had been to provide access to a free, appropriate public education, and access remained the goal for the next decade or so (Harbin et al., 1998).
- 1993 - Concurrent with the shift in the public sector from emphasis on inputs to outcomes, findings from a national study showed that the outcomes that secondary students with disabilities were achieving fell far short of ideal (Wagner, Blackorby, Cameto, & Newman, 1993).
- 2003 - The ensuing efforts directed at this problem have resulted in substantial progress in the last 10 years, improving the quality and availability of information on outcomes for elementary and secondary students in special education (Thurlow, Wiley, & Bielinski, 2003).

Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education

- 1986 - PL 99-457 brought early intervention services to children with disabilities from birth to 3 and to their families.
- 2004 - Performance and management assessments employing a Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART), recently conducted by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), gave both the Part C and Preschool Part B Program scores of "0" in results and accountability. OMB's conclusions about both programs were "results not demonstrated" and "new measures needed" (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2004/pma.html>).
- 2004 - Nonetheless, we still have no system for regularly providing outcome information on children served in the Part B Section 619 (3 to 5) and Part C (0 to 3) programs of IDEA.

- Local and state programs have limited capacity to produce or use child and family outcome information to examine the effectiveness of their programs and for program improvement. Programs need clear indicators of change in child and family outcomes to make results-based program and curriculum decisions. Accountability is not just about funders holding programs responsible, but also about providers using outcome data to ensure that the needs of every child are being met.
- 2002 - President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education noted the focus for children with disabilities should be on results, not on process. Despite the ubiquitous demand for good data on outcomes, this need has not been met to date because the development of outcome-based accountability systems for young children with disabilities is a daunting task, given the technical and practical challenges involved (Carta, 2002; ECRI-MGD, 1998a, b, c, d).

Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center

- The Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers with Disabilities is a project being conducted by SRI International under a cooperative agreement to SRI International from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education.
- The ECO Center seeks to promote the development and implementation of child and family outcome measures for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with disabilities. These measures can be used in local, state, and national accountability systems. The Center is a collaborative effort of SRI International, the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, the Juniper Gardens Children's Project at the University of Kansas, the University of Connecticut, and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education.
- A substantial initial challenge in developing an outcomes system capable of addressing the needs of users at many levels is balancing the federal government's need for information as soon as possible with the importance of collecting and incorporating input from all levels of systems users and other stakeholders.
- To address this challenge, the ECO Center has proposed a "two-track" approach for child and family outcomes. The first, or fast, track will be constructed to meet the government's immediate need for information. This track will be built around a small set of outcomes (three to five) that will serve as a common core across all states. The second track will be a slower, more comprehensive track, focused primarily on developing a system for addressing state and local needs for information. The slower track will incorporate the outcomes from the fast track but will be more comprehensive. It will include other outcomes as options for states. Because states may elect to include or not include these outcomes and the corresponding indicators, the resulting outcome data could differ from state to state.